

often the case, after they've died. We should let people know that we appreciate them, that their efforts are noticed, while it still makes a difference to them." These wise words are from the pen of Ruth L. Tighe, citizen, librarian, environmentalist, community activist, and newspaper columnist in the Northern Mariana Islands.

I would like to take Ruth's advice and not wait for the new year by telling Congress about Ruth Tighe herself. She is a person whose efforts have been noticed and noteworthy for more than three decades in the Marianas. She has made a difference, and I want her to know how much she is appreciated.

Even before arriving in the Mariana Islands, Ruth was living a remarkable story. Born in Germany in 1931, Ruth emigrated to the United States with her family in 1934. She grew up in upstate New York, became a naturalized citizen and worked her way through school, eventually earning a master's in library science from Columbia University while raising five children as a single mother.

It was as a professional librarian that Ruth came to our islands. She was there to help the people of Guam, the Northern Marianas and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands prepare for the first-ever White House Conference on Libraries and Information Science held in 1979. Ruth fell in love with the Pacific and soon returned, working for the Marianas Department of Education. She has trained school librarians and raised public awareness about the importance of reading and enriching the quality of our lives.

Ruth eventually turned from managing the written words of others to writing her own. She became a reporter and editor of one of the Marianas newspapers. She also established her signature column, "On My Mind." Over the course of her many years of commenting on island issues, Ruth has always strived to be fair, objective, informative and entertaining. Judging by the popularity of her column, today a much-read and respected blog among people from many diverse backgrounds and walks of life, I believe she has succeeded.

Never afraid of challenges, at the age of 50, Ruth took up scuba diving and has since accumulated a record of over 400 dives. Enamored with the rich coral reefs and colorful marine life Ruth encountered under water, Ruth became a fierce defender of all the natural environment. She has advocated for the protection of coral reefs and native forests, stricter clean-water regulations, the cleanup of PCB contamination in the village of Tanapag, protection of the historic Sugar Dock Beach, and the creation of the national marine monument in the Northern Mariana Islands. Ruth has drawn others to the cause, helping form several community-based environmental groups, including the CNMI Organization For Conservation Outreach, Beautify CNMI, the Friends of the Monument, and the Mariana Islands Nature Alliance.

Here is another familiar view of Ruth. Approaching the microphone at a public hearing and introducing herself, Ruth Tighe, citizen. Through her writing and through her own active participation, Ruth has been an advocate for good governance and a model of informed citizenry. Always, Ruth offers constructive solutions that seek to benefit the islands and all the people, rather than her own personal or professional gain. Among many causes, Ruth has campaigned for the advancement of women's groups, a transparent and accountable government, and a more humanitarian approach to immigration and labor reform.

Ruth's weekly column and other writings have also helped foster and strengthen our sense of community. Often this takes the form of praise to people and organizations in the Marianas for jobs well done, including resourceful teachers, local newspapers for insightful reports, businesses that provided excellent customer service, community volunteers, and numerous individuals who wrote articulate columns or letters of their own.

I feel glad to be able to turn the light back on Ruth herself for the praiseworthy person that she is. Today Ruth is valiantly battling cancer of the lung, successfully, it would appear.

But I want to take her advice and say loud and clear, and on behalf of the people of the Northern Mariana Islands, thank you, Ruth Tighe, for all you have done, and, we pray, will continue to do for years to come to make the Northern Mariana Islands a wonderful place to be.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PAUL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. WOOLSEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

NOVEMBER MASSACRE IN PHILIPPINES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of Mr. BERMAN's resolution, H. Con. Res. 218.

On November 23, 57 people were systematically massacred in the southern Maguindanao Province of the Philippines. The massacre is considered the deadliest election-related attack in the country's history.

Reports have alleged that the massacre was a planned ambush by the

Ampatuan clan on a group of journalists and family members of supporters of a gubernatorial candidate, Ismael Mangudadatu. The group was traveling through the Ampatuan township in a caravan to the provincial capital to file candidacy documents on behalf of Mr. Mangudadatu. The 57 victims were covered in a mass grave only a day after they were killed.

Mr. Mangudadatu, the gubernatorial candidate, has stated that he believes it was clear the attack was planned because the huge hole that acted as the mass grave had been dug before the attack.

The Ampatuan clan is one of the most politically powerful in the region and has ruled the impoverished Maguindanao Province since 2001 with brute force and intimidation. The Ampatuans are notorious for running a large pro-government army, which include many militiamen who serve as an auxiliary force to the military and police when battling insurgents in the region.

Andal Ampatuan, Jr., a local mayor and son of the provincial governor, is believed to have ordered the killings and has been charged with 25 counts of murder. He turned himself in late November.

Philippine President Arroyo declared November 26 a national day of mourning and said, "This is a supreme act of inhumanity that is a blight on our nation. The perpetrators will not escape justice. The law will hunt them until they are caught."

I hope President Arroyo stays true to these words. However, the Ampatuan clan is strongly allied with President Arroyo, and human rights groups are concerned that this relationship could hinder an impartial investigation. Additionally, human rights groups and democracy advocates are concerned about a recent decision President Arroyo made to declare martial law in the region, arguing she lacks the constitutional authority.

Mr. Speaker, as the co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus for Freedom of the Press, there is another element of this attack that is particularly distressing to me. Of the 57 killed in the massacre, 30 were journalists and media workers. According to Reporters Without Borders and the Committee to Protect Journalists, this is the deadliest known attack on journalists in history.

Information is power, which is precisely why journalists far too often become targets for groups like the Ampatuan clan. A free and independent media provides the nourishment for democracy to thrive and grow and expose corrupt factions like the Ampatuan clan. Citizens rely upon credible, accurate information from the media to make informed decisions and hold their leaders accountable. Reporters and editors who demand reform, accountability, and transparency increasingly find themselves at risk. The censorship, intimidation and murder of these

journalists are not crimes only against these individuals; they also impact those who are denied access to their ideas and information.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot let these crimes go unpunished. We need to shine a spotlight brightly on the Philippines until those who are responsible are brought to justice. President Arroyo needs to sever any ties she has with the Ampatuan clan and should request an independent investigation by the Philippine National Bureau of Investigation. For far too long the Philippines have suffered from the plague of corruption, impunity, and violence, and it is time for the international community to demand reform.

November 23, 2009, was a sad day in the history of Philippines and a dark day for press freedom. I was proud to support the resolution's passage, which puts the United States on record as condemning this atrocious act and sending our condolences to the families and friends of the victims.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. GRAYSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GRAYSON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

WE ARE LOSING OUR FREEDOM IN THE UNITED STATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from California (Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, earlier the majority leader, in his dialogue with the Republican whip, stated that perhaps the reason that Republicans were relieved of their responsibility of being the majority in the House of Representatives was because of the substance of legisla-

tion considered at that time, rather than procedure.

Well, I am not going to quarrel with the majority leader, but I would like to change our debate from the past to the present and the future. I would like to examine some common themes that are running through the substance of the legislation that has been presented on this floor during this year.

I might say that my desire to have this hour today was prompted by a discussion I had with a member of my constituency, a woman living in my district, who came up to me at my last town hall meeting. As we were wrapping up the meeting and after I had spoken with a number of individual constituents, I was starting to leave the room when this woman, somewhat older than I, came up to me, and she had tears in her eyes and she literally began to tremble as she began to speak to me. What was noticeable immediately was that she spoke with a heavy Eastern European accent.

She explained to me that decades ago she had had the opportunity to escape from a communist country and come to this country for the freedom that it allowed her. She said, with tears in her eyes, Mr. Congressman, please help us stop what's happened. She said, I fear that we are losing our freedom here in the United States and that my children and my grandchildren will not have the same freedoms that I came to this country for. She also said that she had recently visited friends in Europe, and she said, Mr. Congressman, they are laughing at us. They are seeing us give away our freedoms in this country. Please don't allow that to happen.

I thought that it might be important for us to, on this occasion, pause for a moment and think about what that means. What do we mean when we talk about freedom in this country? What was this concept of freedom or liberty? How was it understood by our Founding Fathers? Well, the best way to try and figure that out, I would suggest, is to go to what we call our founding documents, the primary of which is the Declaration of Independence.

In the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence it says these words, We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to affect their safety and happiness.

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Words that many of us have read as we have studied them in school, per-

haps not studied them enough. These words are not that difficult to understand. Their meanings are not that difficult to ascertain. "We hold these truths to be self-evident": It means that they are easily understood. By applying reason, we can see that these truths exist, not just for us but for all people who have the capacity to reason. The first thing they say is that "all men are created equal." Of course, they meant that in the universal term, that all individuals are created equal.

"That they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights." Now, the revolutionary aspect of that simple statement was this: Prior to that time, organized governments appeared to suggest that the rights that people had were not given to them by their creator; that is, they did not find themselves within individuals. Rather, all rights were those invested in the government, usually the majestic monarch, who, if they had a religious belief, it was that the monarch had a direct relationship with God far more direct than the individual, and that therefore the monarch decided what rights were given to the people. In other words, individuals only had rights at the sufferance of the government. The revolutionary aspect of this Declaration of Independence was not only that we were declaring our independence from the mother country but we were basing that declaration on self-evident truths that we as individuals had rights given to us directly by our God. This was a transformation of the then traditional thought that the individual was subservient necessarily to the state.

And we went further in this statement, our forefathers did. That is to declare some of those unalienable rights to be life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And then interestingly in this Declaration, our Founders thought it important to say this: "That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men." Not to obtain these rights because the rights already exist. To secure these rights. Government is to be put in a place of protecting those rights that already exist, not to give us those rights. Now, this is revolutionary because it established a relationship in which the people essentially rule. And that's why it said further that governments are instituted among men—meaning men, women, and children—among all, deriving, that is, the governments, their just powers from the consent of the governed. In other words, once again it is the notion of limited government, a government limited in its power only by that which is given to them by the people and the people only give up those rights which they voluntarily decide to give up. And then, of course, when we get to our Constitution, the actual legal document which underlies all of the laws of the United States, it begins with these words:

"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union,